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HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR

Food for Two



A radio interview between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. Morse Salisbury, Office of Information, broadcast Thursday, September 23, 1937, in the Department of Agriculture period, National Farm and Home Hour.

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MR. SALISBURY:

Here we are in Washington. It's another Bee - you - ti - ful September day - the kind of weather that puts us all on our toes. And here at the microphone across the table from me is Ruth Van Deman, from the Bureau of Home Economics, all set and rarin' to go. All right, Ruth, here's the signal, shoot.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Thanks, Morse. I'm very glad to get off to a fast start today. For I want to talk about the Young Homemakers, and you know they set a lively pace.

MR. SALISBURY:

The Young Homemakers?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

That's just my name for the up-and-coming young married women who keep the home economists humping.

MR. SALISBURY:

I see. The 1937 model of the American housewife - streamlined and quick on the pick up.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Yes, and very flexible in action. Well, it just happens I've been in close touch with a number of these Young Homemakers lately - business girls and college girls who've been married for a year or two. Morse, they certainly are going at their job in a highly intelligent way.

MR. SALISBURY:

Are they?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

I think they are. But I see a little skeptical look in your eye.

MR. SALISBURY:

Not skeptical, lady. Just some of that scientific curiosity left over from last Thursday.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Oh, I see, that's coming back to haunt me. Well, I'd like to tell you about one of these Young Homemakers.

MR. SALISBURY:

I'd like to hear about her. Go ahead.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Well, this young lady was married about a year and a half ago to a young chemical engineer, just out of college. His job took him out to the West Coast and I saw them when I was out there this summer. You should see the way they've organized their budget and their household finances. Now, they started practically from scratch on his salary.

MR. SALISBURY:

In one of those California bungalows?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

No. They felt they couldn't afford a house to start with. They're in a small furnished apartment. But even before they went out to look for the apartment, they sat down and drew up a complete budget --food, shelter, clothing and so on right down the line.

MR. SALISBURY:

Well one thing puzzles me, Ruth. How'd they know what to allow for food, just starting that way in a new place?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Morse, that's one of the things that tickles me most about them. And it shows how young people put home economics information to work. I'd given this Young Homemaker a bride's library of our bulletins. I went to the store and bought a box letter file all neatly alphabetized. She's a very business-like person, so that made a great hit with her.

MR. SALISBURY:

I should think it might.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

And I found when I got out there this summer that she and her husband had worn those bulletins dog-eared, and that he'd built a special shelf for them over the kitchen sink. They took me right out into the kitchen to show it to me first thing.

MR. SALISBURY:

And did that make you feel good.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

It did, I admit. Of course anybody's glad when a gift turns out to be useful. But getting back to your question, Morse, about the allowance for food in the budget. Here's what they did. Neither of them had ever studied nutrition or kept any track of what it costs to feed a family. So when they had to put down a food estimate for their own budget, they decided to get expert advice. They got out the bride's library and took out Dr. Stiebeling's bulletin on "Diets to Fit the Family Income".

MR. SALISBURY:

And I suppose they proceeded to figure which one of those four diets they could afford on his salary.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

That's exactly what they did. They went over the table in that bulletin showing what part of the total income it's reasonable to spend for food each week.

They decided they could allow \$9.00 a week for their food bill.

MR. SALISBURY:

That is \$9.00 a week for the two of them.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Yes.

MR. SALISBURY:

His lunches included?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Yes, that \$9.00 takes in the food for his lunches. He has to carry his lunch every day because the big chemical plant where he works is a long way from town and hasn't any cafeteria of its own. But, Morse, that isn't all they did.

MR. SALISBURY:

Go on, let's have the rest of the story.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Well, after they got the budget all worked out on paper, they pulled out one of their old school notebooks, the loose-leaf kind, and set up a system of classified accounts. They even ruled off separate columns for the different groups of food - milk, vegetables and fruits, meats, eggs, cereals, and so on - just like the set-up in the bulletin.

MR. SALISBURY:

I get it. So they could check on whether they were buying a well-balanced diet with that \$9.00 a week.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Precisely. And after my young friend had been marketing for a few weeks, she worked out a good division of her food dollar. She knew then just how her money was going among the different groups of food. She doesn't keep quite such detailed records on her food purchases anymore now she has the general pattern established. But they still take off an evening every month and balance their accounts and check against their budget estimates.

MR. SALISBURY:

Ruth, how long did you say they've been married?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

About a year and a half.

MR. SALISBURY:

Well they are very remarkable young people. So many budgets go into the discard after six months or six weeks.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Yes, I know, but they're getting such a big kick out of it, I believe they're going to keep it up. When I was out there they were offering each other a prize to see who would be the first to find the 50 cents short on their July balance.

MR. SALISBURY:

I'll bet the lady got the prize.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Not if she didn't actually win it. This is a strictly sporting proposition with them. But I can tell you she doesn't lose any tricks when she goes to market. She's a very smart shopper, for meats particularly. She knows her cuts. She got hold of charts of beef carcasses, and lamb, and pork - the ones showing retail and wholesale cuts.

MR. SALISBURY:

Smart girl. That's the real way to learn about tender and tough cuts, to map 'em out in the forequarter, and the hindquarter, and so on.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Yes. She learned her meat cuts. And then from our bulletin on "Meat Dishes at Low Cost" she learned how to make good use of the less tender ones.

MR. SALISBURY:

Then the old gags about brides never being able to buy anything but porterhouse steak don't fit with this young lady.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

No, but she has steak and chops now and then on special occasions. I was very much interested to get an SOS from her one day last winter, asking me about lamb liver. She's one of those persons who has to watch her blood count very carefully. Several times the doctor has found her slightly anemic, and he told her she ought to eat liver at least once a week. So she sent me this letter, air mail, to know whether lamb liver was just as good as calves' liver and whether it needed parboiling. She said her budget simply wouldn't allow for calves' liver unless she put it down under health.

MR. SALISBURY:

What did you tell her? I've wondered myself about the food value of different kinds of liver.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

They're all about the same. The liver of all the meat animals seems to be rich in iron and other minerals, and vitamins. And lamb liver is very tender, though it's a little more compact in texture than calves' liver. I urged her not to parboil off any of the good food value. But just to broil it, or fry it with bacon if she wishes, and serve it just as she would calves' liver.

MR. SALISBURY:

Well, I'm glad to learn about liver - though, I'm quite sure I don't have to eat it for the sake of my blood count. But I do like liver, preferably along with some good fried onions -a soupcon of fried onions would you say, Ruth?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Morse, a soupcon of fried onions wouldn't begin to be enough to suit you I'm afraid. Or our young friend the chemical engineer either.

MR. SALISBURY:

There's a real chemist. He knows the strength in H₂S. I'm glad he likes onions.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

And by the way, my Young Homemaker says she never trims corners on the fruits and vegetables in their food budget. Of course out there on the West Coast they're plentiful and cheap all the year around, but she's learned to pick and choose even among the fresh kinds. When I was there I noticed she served a green leafy vegetable or a yellow one, and sometimes both, practically every day.

MR. SALISBURY:

To make sure of her vitamin A.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Yes. And, by the way, she says those fine pictures of the different groups of food and the week of sample menus in the bulletin are a great help to her in planning her market list before she goes to the store.

MR. SALISBURY:

Well, give her my congratulations the next time you write. I don't know her name, but that doesn't matter. I live on a budget too--sometimes for three whole months at a stretch. I have sympathy for the struggles of Mr. and Mrs. Young Homemaker, and I can imagine their fun with the accounts every month. And I do admire their persistence.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

So do I, Morse. They're the kind of a young couple that warms a home economist's heart.

MR. SALISBURY:

Send them the laurel wreath from both of us. And thank you, Ruth, for giving us this interesting story of food for two.

And now for the benefit of Young Homemakers, and battle-scarred veterans in family budget wars, and anybody who happens to be interested in this matter of food budgets, I'll repeat the titles of those two bulletins Miss Van Deman mentioned. The first one is "Diets to Fit the Family Income." The other one, "Meat Dishes at Low Cost", particularly timely right now.

